

# The Honolulu Fire Department

By CHARLES H. THURSTON, Chief Engineer.



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Charles H. Thurston, Chief Engineer of the Honolulu Fire Department, was born in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, November 21, 1870, and is therefore just 31 years of age. He came to Honolulu about 11 years ago, and has been connected with the fire department in various capacities for the past five years. He was foreman of Engine No. 1, when the station was located on King street, from where he was transferred to the Central Fire Station and promoted to the rank of Assistant Chief Engineer, holding that office for a year and a half. During Chief Hunt's illness last spring Mr. Thurston assumed temporary charge of the entire department as Acting Chief Engineer. The death of Mr. Hunt opened the way for his promotion to the highest rank in the department, the Fire Commissioners appointing him as chief on June 15, 1901. He has a splendid record in the department as a brave, energetic fireman and involved upon him, one not afraid to risk his life to save others.

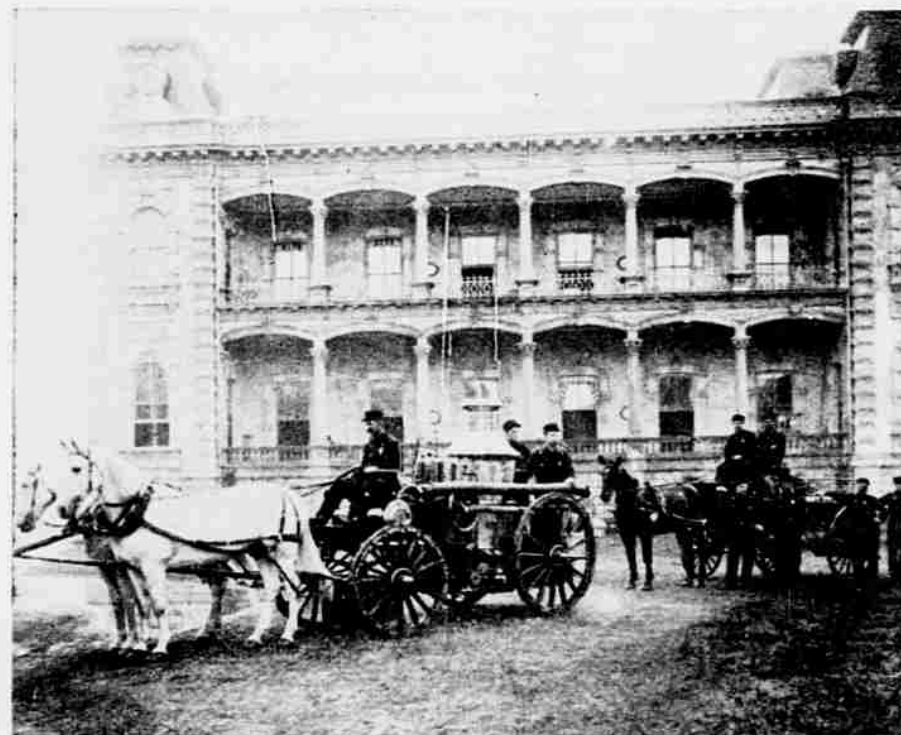
On the night of Friday, October 21, 1898, a live wire fell before Engine House No. 1 on King street during a severe rain storm and a native hackman was killed by coming in contact with the wire. Two United States volunteer soldiers attempted to remove the body and one was killed. The other was prostrated. Thurston who was then foreman, was on watch in the station. He saw the danger in touching the bodies and warned a physician not to go near them. The latter did not heed the warning and was also stricken. Thurston at once made a fine effort to save the living and after tugging at the men, finally drew them away from the wire which was charged with 1,000 volts. During the sanitary fires caused by the Board of Health during the plague, Mr. Thurston was next in command under Chief Hunt and much of the hard work done as a brave, energetic fireman and involved upon him.

With the growth of the city of Honolulu has come the increased protection against fire, and today Honolulu stands ready to respond to any alarm with a finely equipped department and well drilled fire corps. The evolution of the old volunteer department into the present paid system has been gradual, systematic and thorough, none but the best equipment being utilized and none but the pick of men placed upon the payrolls. In many respects the Honolulu department with its two stations is a model integral part of the government and one which will stand well the searchlight of comparison with the departments of other cities.

There have been disastrous fires in Honolulu which the department fought and curbed and the value of the system has been demonstrated on more than one occasion. Last year the department was called into action almost continuously for four or five months to prevent the spread of the fires started in various sections of the city by the Board of Health as a measure for stamping out the plague, and the department then showed the stuff of which it was made. The equipment for the city has been gradually increased since then and by April of the present year the three main portions of the city—Honolulu proper, Makiki, and Kalihi—will have ample protection.

by the Gamewell Fire Alarm Telegraph System, 65 non-interfering boxes, 29 of which are to be of the keyless pattern. The last legislature made an appropriation for the installation of the fire-alarm system and the contract calls for its completion in working order ready to be handed over to the department by April 1 of the present year. Such a system has long been needed in a city of the size of Honolulu with its cosmopolitan population and the inflammable character of most of the buildings. With this alarm system completed, the new fire station in Palama equipped and ready for work, and an aerial hook and ladder on hand, such as I hope to see connected with the department this year, Honolulu can feel proud of its up-to-date system. The last legislature appropriated the sum of \$4,500 for the purchase of an aerial hook and ladder truck, but failed to provide for its maintenance in commission. With such equipment we will be in a position to handle any ordinary fire within the city proper.

The department consists of the following paid companies: Engine No. 1, housed at the Central station; Engine No. 2, housed at Central station; Engine No. 3, housed at Makiki; Chemical company, housed at Central station. There are 37 men on the payrolls at present, to which number will be added ten men for the Palama station. The department is managed by a Board of three commissioners, appointed



ENGINE COMPANY NO. 1.

The equipment of the Honolulu fire department consists of a Central Fire station built of Hawaiian lava rock, two and a half stories high which cost \$37,350; Makiki fire station, built of wood, two stories high, which cost \$2,969; and the Palama station, built of brick, in course of erection, which will cost \$18,954. The apparatus consists of one first size Metropolitan engine, built by the American Fire Engine Company, with a capacity of 1,000 gallons per minute; one second size Clapp & Jones fire engine, with a capacity of 800 gallons per minute; two second size Amoskeag engines of 1,400 gallons capacity per minute; one third size Amoskeag engine of 600 gallons capacity per minute; one fourth size Clapp & Jones engine, drawn by hand, of 500 gallons capacity per minute; one double 60 gallons Champion chemical engine; eighteen horses; three two-horse hose wagons; one single-horse hose wagon; 4,500 feet cotton hose; 2,500 feet rubber hose, together with all the other necessary equipment in the matter of tools for fire fighting.

As for water supply there are 200 three-way standing and fifty ground hydrants distributed throughout the city, and provision was made for an increase of hydrants by an appropriation of \$6,000 by the last legislature. At the present time there is being installed

ed by the Governor, who serve without pay.

Since I was chosen as chief engineer of the department to succeed the late Chief Hunt on June 15, 1901, there have been thirty calls for the services of the department, among them notably being the fires in the Hall block and Honolulu Stockyards, two of the largest the Honolulu department has had to contend with, outside of the plague fires. The heaviest losers in these fires were the first to thank the department for its services in attempting to save their property, which indicates that everybody is satisfied with the workings of the department. There is a house drill for all the companies three times a week, consisting of bed drill and floor alarms. The bed drill trains the men for responding quickly at night when they are asleep in their dormitories. They arise, don their clothes, slip down the sliding poles and take position for getting out of the stations. The average time for this drill is about 20 seconds. Hitching up from the floor and getting out into the street takes about ten seconds, although no attempt is made at fancy exhibitions. Every man belonging to the department sleeps in the dormitories. They are given 24 hours liberty every twelve days, and never more than three at a time are off duty.



KALIHI FIRE STATION NO. 4.